

**IMPROVING THE FEDERAL RESPONSE: PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,  
RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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## IMPROVING THE FEDERAL RESPONSE: PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,  
RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:15 p.m., in room 310, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Donald M. Payne, Jr. [Chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Payne, Richmond, Rose, Underwood, King, Joyce, Crenshaw, and Guest.

Mr. PAYNE. The Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery will come to order. The subcommittee is meeting today to receive testimony on improving the Federal response perspectives on the state of emergency management.

Good afternoon. I want to thank the witnesses for coming to Washington, DC today to discuss the incredibly important topic: The state of emergency management and preparedness in our country.

I also would like to take the opportunity to welcome Representative King to his first hearing as Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. I look forward to the work that we'll do together over this Congress.

As we have seen the last few years, disasters are affecting communities across America more frequently and more intensely. Storms are getting worse. Climate change will only continue that trend, unfortunately. Congress has to ensure that the Federal Government is doing everything possible to support communities as they prepare for and recover from disasters.

Based on the outcomes from the 2017 storms, particularly in Puerto Rico, there is no question that the Federal Government's response needs improvement. That starts with investing more in preparedness before a disaster occurs, with the hope of saving lives and property and reducing costs after a disaster.

Research shows that for every dollar we invest in mitigation funding, we save \$6 from reduced damage after a disaster. However, FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Fund still gets shortchanged every year. That needs to change.

This is not just true for disasters, but all aspects of preparedness. States and local governments need more support in preparing

for terrorist attacks, too. As the nature of terrorism threats are changing, with increasing lone-wolf and domestic extremist attacks, State and local governments need Federal assistance to build up their response capabilities.

Unfortunately, funding for preparedness grants, the Homeland Security Grant Program, has not fully rebounded from cuts imposed by the Republican-controlled House in fiscal years 2011 and 2012. That must change.

Moreover, we must be prepared to respond to complex, concurrent events, as we saw in 2017, with multiple hurricanes and wildfires. FEMA does not have enough workers to meet its target goals. Additionally, FEMA has not kept pace in ensuring its workers have adequate training.

This was a particular problem in 2017, where FEMA's own assessment found that it placed staff in positions beyond their experience and, in some instances, beyond their capabilities.

Our panel here today offers a range of diverse and unique perspectives into how the Federal Government can improve in the fields of emergency management and preparedness. I look forward to hearing their views on this important topic, and to discussing with the Ranking Member and my colleagues how we can work together to ensure resilient communities.

[The statement of Chairman Payne follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.

MARCH 13, 2019

As we have seen the last few years, disasters are affecting communities across America more frequently and more intensely. Storms are getting worse, and climate change will only continue that trend, unfortunately. Congress has to ensure that the Federal Government is doing everything possible to support communities as they prepare for and recover from disasters.

Based on the outcomes from the 2017 storms, particularly in Puerto Rico, there is no question the Federal Government's response needs improvement. That starts with investing more in preparedness before a disaster occurs, with the hope of saving lives and property and reducing costs after a disaster.

Research shows that for every \$1 we invest in mitigation funding, we save \$6 from reduced damage after a disaster. However, FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Fund still gets shortchanged every year. That needs to change. This is not just true for disasters, but all aspects of preparedness.

States and local governments need more support in preparing for terrorist attacks, too. As the nature of terrorism threats are changing, with increasing lone-wolf and domestic extremist attacks, State and local governments need Federal assistance to build up their response capabilities. Unfortunately, funding for preparedness grants, the Homeland Security Grant Program, has not fully rebounded from cuts imposed by the Republican-controlled House in fiscal years 2011 and 2012.

That must change. Moreover, we must be prepared to respond to complex, concurrent events, as we saw in 2017, with multiple hurricanes and wildfires.

FEMA does not have enough workers to meet its target goals. Additionally, FEMA has not kept pace in ensuring its workers have adequate training. This was a particular problem in 2017, where FEMA's own assessment found that it "placed staff in positions beyond their experience and, in some instances, beyond their capabilities."

Our panel here today offers a range of diverse and unique perspectives into how the Federal Government can improve in the fields of emergency management and preparedness. I look forward to hearing their views on this important topic, and to discussing with the Ranking Member and my colleagues how we can work together to ensure safer, more resilient communities.

Mr. PAYNE. The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from New York, Mr. King, for an opening statement.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and like you I look forward to working with you, your friend and neighbor, and I think we can do some positive bipartisan work in this Congress. I certainly look forward to it.

I find today's hearing especially important because following the attacks of 9/11 FEMA was 1 of 22 agencies and offices that were combined to form the Department of Homeland Security. Today, FEMA stands with its primary mission to reduce the loss of life and property and to protect the Nation from all hazards, including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

In recent years, you and I saw a Superstorm Sandy which resulted in over 100 deaths. In 2017 we witnessed another, as you said, another devastating disaster season, Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, wildfires that ravaged the West Coast and just last month—yes, last month we saw the terrible tornado in Alabama which devastated Ranking Member Rogers' district.

So strong Federal, State, and local coordination before, during, and after a catastrophic event is key to effective emergency preparedness. The first goal in FEMA's 2018 through 2022 strategic plan promotes the idea that everyone should be prepared when disaster strikes, whether it is a hurricane, tornado, or a terror attack.

As evidenced by the terror attacks on September 11, and more recently the October 17 vehicle ramming in lower Manhattan that killed 8 people, the December 2017 Port Authority bombing, the 2016 Chelsea bombing, the New York City area, which includes New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester and a great part of Rockland has been and remains our Nation's top terror target.

FEMA's preparedness grants provide State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments the ability to build, sustain, and improve capabilities to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards, including terrorism threats.

Federal funds through vital grant programs such as the State Homeland Security Grant Program, Urban Area Security Initiative, Port Security Grant Program, and Transit Security Grant Program enable local communities to support their first responder workforce and to harden their defenses against potential attacks.

Federal grant funding has enabled the New York City Department of Emergency Management, the NYPD, and the FDNY to conduct training and exercises, provide public education and outreach and develop response protocols and safety initiatives to significantly increase security preparedness.

For instance, grant funding has enhanced the Ready New York Program, New York City's educational program to encourage residents to prepare for all types of emergencies. Federal grant programs have also supported the city's CERT program and the City-wide Incident Management System among others.

The ability to utilize FEMA grant funding is critical in the overall safety of communities. This hearing will provide a broad overview of the current state of emergency preparedness and will allow the witnesses here today to present their insights and priorities for emergency preparedness moving forward.

Additionally, I look forward to hearing suggestions from our witnesses on how FEMA's new administrator can improve disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back to you.  
[The statement of Ranking Member King follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER PETER T. KING

MARCH 13, 2019

Following the horrific attacks on September 11, 2001, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was one of 22 disparate agencies and offices combined to create the Department of Homeland Security. FEMA stands today with its primary mission to "reduce the loss of life and property and to protect the Nation from all hazards, including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters."

In 2012, Superstorm Sandy wreaked havoc on the States of New York and New Jersey, as well as 10 other States, resulting in over 100 deaths, hundreds of thousands of impacted residents, and \$65 billion in damages.

In 2017, we witnessed another devastating disaster season. From Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, to the wildfires that ravaged the West Coast, FEMA had its work cut out for it.

Strong Federal, State, and local coordination before, during, and after a catastrophic event is key to effective emergency preparedness. The first goal in FEMA's 2018–2022 Strategic Plan promotes the idea that everyone should be prepared when disaster strikes whether it is a hurricane or a terror attack.

As evidenced by the terrorist attacks on September 11, and more recently, the October 2017 vehicle ramming in lower Manhattan that killed 8 people, and the December 2017 Port Authority bombing, New York City has been and remains our Nation's top terror target. FEMA's preparedness grants provide State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments the ability to build, sustain, and improve capabilities to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards, including terrorism threats.

Federal funds through vital grant programs such as the State Homeland Security Grant Program, Urban Area Security Initiative, Port Security Grant Program, and Transit Security Grant Program enable local communities to support their first responder workforce and to harden their defenses against potential attacks.

Federal grant funding has enabled the New York City Department of Emergency Management, the NYPD, and the FDNY to conduct training and exercises, provide public education and outreach, and develop response protocols, and safety initiatives to significantly increase security preparedness.

For example, grant funding has enhanced the Ready New York Program, New York City's educational campaign to encourage residents to prepare for all types of emergencies. Federal funding has also supported NYC's CERT Program, Continuity of Operations Program, and the City-wide Incident Management System, among others. The ability to utilize FEMA grant funding is critical to the success of our first responders and the overall safety of our communities.

This hearing will provide a broad overview of the current state of emergency preparedness and will allow the witnesses here today to present their insights and priorities for emergency preparedness moving forward. Additionally, I look forward to hearing suggestions from our witnesses on how FEMA's new administrator can improve disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Other Members of the subcommittee are reminded that under the committee rules, opening statements may be submitted for the record.

[The statement of Chairman Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BENNIE G. THOMPSON

MARCH 13, 2019

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman Payne and Ranking Member King for holding today's hearing.

I am pleased that the subcommittee's first hearing of the 116th Congress is focused on the state of the Nation's emergency preparedness. As we know all too well, in 2017, the hurricane season and unprecedented wildfires exposed major gaps in our Nation's emergency response capabilities and general preparedness.

FEMA's poor response to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico highlighted how far behind we are in emergency management and how much further we must go to provide all Americans the help they need in times of disaster.

Having witnessed the catastrophe that was Hurricane Katrina, I know first-hand the horrors of a subpar emergency response from the Federal Government and FEMA. For that reason, I am especially concerned that FEMA has not made more significant improvements in its response in the 14 years since Hurricane Katrina.

FEMA is not only the leader of the Federal Government's emergency response efforts, but the Agency also supports and provides critical assistance to State and local governments in their time of need.

Simply put, State and local governments depend on FEMA's assistance when disaster strikes.

In addition to natural disasters being a threat to our Nation, other security threats such as school shootings and lone-wolf terrorist attacks have been on the rise. These threats to our homeland underscore the importance of emergency preparedness, and the need for us to improve in this area. The consequences are too high for the status quo to remain.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today about how the Federal Government and, specifically FEMA, can improve its partnership with State and local governments to ensure a more robust response to disasters, both natural and man-made. Also, I look forward to hearing from our witness from the American Federation of Government Employees about the key role the workforce plays in protecting our Nation from disasters.

I know FEMA continues to have staffing shortages and other workforce challenges it must address to improve its response capabilities and build a stronger agency. Congress needs to do its part to ensure FEMA does just that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PAYNE. I welcome our panel of witnesses. Our first witness is Major Louise—Louis Bucchere. I am sorry. He is the commanding officer of the Emergency Management Section with New Jersey's State Police, which I should know better.

Next we have Mr. Steve Reaves, the FEMA Local 4060 president, part of the American Federation of Government Employees.

Then Mr. Martin, is it Senterfitt, is the fire deputy chief and director of Emergency Management for Monroe County, Florida. Boy I am having a rough time here.

Last, I will relinquish to the Ranking Member to introduce the final witness.

Mr. KING. Our final witness will be Chief Jim Waters from NYPD. I have known Jim for more than 15 years. He was the head of the JTTF in New York from the NYPD side. He is now the chief of counterterrorism. He has done a truly outstanding job. He really personifies what the NYPD is all about, and I am proud that he has agreed to testify here today. Thank you.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

Without objection, the witnesses' full statements will be inserted in the record.

I now ask each witness to summarize his or her statement for 5 minutes, beginning with Major Bucchere.

**STATEMENT OF MAJOR LOUIS V. BUCCHERE, COMMANDING OFFICER, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES, NEW JERSEY STATE POLICE**

Major BUCCHERE. Good afternoon, Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, and Members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

It is an honor to speak on behalf of the many dedicated professionals at the New Jersey State Police and on behalf of Colonel Patrick J. Callahan who also serves as the State director of emergency management.

I am Major Louis Bucchere, commanding officer of the Emergency Management Section which is also known as the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management. NJOEM is co-located with our State police office of the regional operations and intelligence center at the State's fusion center, which allows for seamless information sharing and cooperation between the emergency management and intelligence functions.

The State plans for all hazards and all threats. In the aftermath of Sandy, which displaced some coastal residents for years, NJOEM's objective has been to enhance the State's internal capacity to manage large-scale incidents.

We accomplish this with the support of Federal grants and equipment and by leveraging relationships supporting the emergency and management assistance compact, increasing our cadre of trained emergency management professionals, and enhancing community preparedness.

NJOEM facilitates regular meetings with emergency management staff from key State agencies, nonprofit and volunteer groups, county emergency management offices, and Federal agencies. This group is the cornerstone of our emergency management program.

In addition, we work directly with county emergency management offices and also collaborate with the private sector. We also maintain a critical partnership with the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness to enhance preparedness, prevention, and response efforts for terrorist attacks and cyber incidents.

NJOEM also leverages task forces to address concerns for the State such as sheltering, evacuation, and opioid use. New Jersey's Task Force One has been deployed several times since qualifying as a FEMA urban search-and-rescue team and provides local search and rescue assistance in the State.

Four members of the FEMA integration team are assigned to work with NJOEM to provide assistance with planning for sheltering, housing, mitigation, and community emergency response teams. We are appreciative of their support.

New Jersey actively participates in the emergency management assistance compact. Recently, New Jersey supported the deployment of personnel to the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, California, and Hawaii. In 2017 alone, New Jersey deployed over 800 personnel to EMAC missions.

The State also deployed critical assets including industrial generators to Georgia and a mobile field hospital to the Virgin Islands. Our deployed first responders use their skills and bring back best practices to New Jersey and fortify relationships with other States.

However, EMAC deployments involve a significant financial outlay and the reimbursement process is time-consuming. In New Jersey's case, reimbursement of several million dollars from 2017 is still outstanding. While EMAC is a State-to-State agreement, all parties, including the Federal Government would benefit from a streamlined reimbursement process.

NJOEM strives to have the best-trained emergency management staff at all levels within the State. Like many other States, we face several challenges in meeting emergency management workforce needs. One of our primary challenges is that staffing is budgeted for blue-sky days. However, we must scale up operations significantly to meet the requirements of gray-sky incidents while still maintaining all critical functions.

Additional challenges exist at the local level where emergency managers are often part-time employees or volunteers. We meet these challenges through training and workforce certification and the use of added contract staff.

NJOEM maintains a full-time training unit and has been approved by FEMA to conduct advanced training in our home State.

The State recently formed the New Jersey All-Hazards Incident Management Team to increase our capacity for incident management support. The team is composed of members from State and local agencies, as well as nonprofits. The team has already distinguished itself during its deployment to Georgia for Hurricane Michael.

Individual preparedness is an on-going focus and a challenge. We collaborate with partners across the State to disseminate and amplify preparedness information. The State has developed training to promote preparedness for individuals with disability and others with access and functional needs.

The State is also assisting the counties with incorporating the DAF and community in emergency response planning and preparedness. To meet the challenge of individual and family preparedness the NJOEM public information office works in conjunction with partner agencies to ensure clear, consistent public messaging.

NJOEM has built a large social media following with a strong brand that the State's residents have come to know and trust. The reality is that effective emergency management requires a commitment from all stakeholders and the community. I believe that New Jersey continues with forward momentum in these areas and is on the path to achieve its emergency management objectives.

With continued Federal support, New Jersey can be more self-reliant and able to render assistance to other States and territories.

I thank you for this opportunity to testify before this subcommittee.

[The prepared statement of Major Bucchere follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LOUIS V. BUCCHERE

MARCH 13, 2019

Good afternoon Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. It is an honor to speak on behalf of the many dedicated professionals at the New Jersey State Police (NJSP), and on behalf of Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, who also serves as the State Director of Emergency Management. I am Major Louis Bucchere, commanding officer of the Emergency Management Section, which is also known as the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM).

NJOEM is co-located with our State Police Office of the Regional Operations and Intelligence Center at the State's fusion center, which allows for seamless information sharing and cooperation between the emergency management and intelligence functions. The State plans for all hazards and all threats.

In the aftermath of Sandy which displaced some coastal residents for years, NJOEM's objective has been to enhance the State's internal capacity to manage large-scale incidents. We accomplish this with the support of Federal grants and equipment, and by:

- leveraging relationships;
- supporting the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC);
- increasing our cadre of trained emergency management professionals; and
- enhancing community preparedness.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

NJOEM facilitates regular meetings with emergency management staff from key State agencies, non-profit and volunteer groups, county emergency management offices, and Federal agencies. This group is the cornerstone of our emergency management program. In addition, we work directly with county emergency management offices, and also collaborate with the private sector. We also maintain a critical partnership with the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness to enhance preparedness, prevention, and response efforts for terrorist attacks and cyber incidents.

NJOEM also leverages task forces to address concerns for the State, such as sheltering, evacuation, and opioid use. New Jersey's Task Force One (NJ-TF1) has been deployed several times since qualifying as a FEMA Urban Search & Rescue Team, and provides local search-and-rescue assistance in the State.

Four members of the FEMA Integration Team are assigned to work with NJOEM to provide assistance with planning for sheltering, housing, mitigation, and Community Emergency Response Teams. We are appreciative of their support.

#### EMAC

New Jersey actively participates in the Emergency Management Assistance Compact. Recently, New Jersey supported the deployment of personnel to the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, California, and Hawaii. In 2017 alone, New Jersey deployed over 800 personnel to EMAC missions. The State also deployed critical assets, including industrial generators to Georgia, and a mobile field hospital to the Virgin Islands. Our deployed first responders use their skills and bring back best practices to New Jersey, and fortify relationships with other States.

However, EMAC deployments involve a significant financial outlay, and the reimbursement process is time-consuming. In New Jersey's case, reimbursement of several million dollars from 2017 is still outstanding. While EMAC is a State-to-State agreement, all parties, including the Federal Government, would benefit from a streamlined reimbursement process.

#### WORKFORCE

NJOEM strives to have the best-trained emergency management staff at all levels within the State. Like many other States, we face several challenges in meeting emergency management workforce needs. One of our primary challenges is that staffing is budgeted for "blue-sky" days. However, we must scale up operations significantly to meet the requirements of "gray-sky" incidents while still maintaining all critical functions. Additional challenges exist at the local level, where emergency managers are often part-time employees or volunteers.

We meet these challenges through training and workforce certification, and the use of added contract staff. NJOEM maintains a full-time training unit and has been approved by FEMA to conduct advanced training in our home State.

The State recently formed the New Jersey All-Hazards Incident Management Team (NJ-AHIMT) to increase our capacity for incident management support. The team is composed of members from State and local agencies, as well as non-profits. The team has already distinguished itself during its deployment to Georgia for Hurricane Michael.

#### COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

Individual preparedness is an on-going focus and a challenge. We collaborate with partners across the State to disseminate and amplify preparedness information. The State has developed training to promote preparedness for individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs (DAFN). The State is also assisting the counties with incorporating the DAFN community in emergency response planning and preparedness.

To meet the challenge of individual and family preparedness, the NJOEM Public Information Office works in conjunction with partner agencies to ensure clear, consistent public messaging. NJOEM has built a large social media following with a strong brand that the State's residents have come to know and trust.

The reality is that effective emergency management requires a commitment from all stakeholders and the community. I believe that New Jersey continues with forward momentum in these areas, and is on the path to achieve its emergency management objectives. With continued Federal support, New Jersey can be more self-reliant and able to render assistance to other States and territories. I thank you for this opportunity to testify before this subcommittee.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Major.

Next we will have testimony from Mr. Reaves for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF STEVE REAVES, FEMA LOCAL 4060 PRESIDENT, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES**

Mr. REAVES. Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, and Members of the subcommittee, my name is Steve Reaves. I am the president of the American Federation of Government Employees, FEMA's National-Local 4060.

When you speak to me—or I am speaking for the members of all of the FEMA that are out there working in the field today. We represent over 3,000 Federal employees Nation-wide. I thank you for the opportunity to testify on FEMA's emergency management.

I am a 23-year Army veteran. I was deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Somalia while in the Army. While in the Army I learned the importance of maintaining high morale and team building and brought those lessons with me to FEMA.

Today I will talk about three workforce issues that if approved would strengthen FEMA's ability to carry out our emergency management and preparedness responsibilities. Those are recruitment, hiring, and retention.

FEMA employees serve Americans by making sure disaster victims are made whole again after Nationally-declared disasters. To improve emergency management preparedness, we must improve how FEMA recruits qualified candidates. There is a backlog of security clearances currently holding up recruitment and hiring, which causes a significant obstacle when trying to recruit qualified candidates.

FEMA struggles to recruit firefighters and police officers at Mount Weather, our emergency operations center in Bluemont, Virginia. Because of the delayed security clearance processes, Mount Weather is understaffed and currently has a deficit of firefighters and police officers.

Their schedules are erratic and their leave requests are denied because of the low staffing levels. If FEMA hired more permanent full-time security background investigators to process security clearances we could expedite the hiring of firefighters, police officers, and qualified FEMA employees Nation-wide.

FEMA employees are hired through a rigorous competitive merit-based examination process that includes application of Veterans Preference. The number of permanent full-time employees needed to carry out successful emergency management preparedness cannot be short-changed.

Currently, there are 1,118 vacant permanent full-time positions at FEMA. Our employees are overworked, under-resourced and

understaffed and are frequently deployed to disaster zones without adequate recuperation time.

Permanent full-time employees are outnumbered at FEMA by nonpermanent employees. In 1988 the Stafford Act created two sets of nonpermanent employees to be hired during disasters. These include a cadre of on-call recovery, response employees, or CORE, and disaster response workers, DRWs, or temporary workers.

CORE and DRWs are employed and are hired using an expedited hiring process during disasters. For purposes of this testimony I will refer to CORE and DRW employees as Stafford Act employees.

There are currently 15,120 Stafford Act employees employed at FEMA. They are used to supplement the permanent full-time staff, which too often results in vacancies for permanent full-time positions going unfilled for extensive periods of time.

The agency keeps Stafford Act employees on for far much longer than their 2- to 4-year terms. Stafford Act employees should be deployed to disaster zones for a specified amount of time to respond to a specific disaster.

These positions were not designed to work with or replace permanent full-time employees on non-disaster work. However, because there is such a need for permanent full-time employees at FEMA it is not uncommon to find Stafford Act employees working outside their job descriptions.

Additional funding and resources are needed for more permanent full-time staff. Identifying permanent full-time vacancies would help improve FEMA emergency management and preparedness and would allow FEMA to hire the number of permanent full-time staff that is truly needed.

An adequate assessment of needs is necessary to calculate the number of permanent full-time current employees to determine where additional permanent full-time employees are needed to address emergency management and preparedness.

Some Stafford Act employees have been working at FEMA far longer than their designated employment term. Some have worked longer than 10 years in Stafford Act positions. The agency continues to transfer their contracts to new disasters without giving them a permanent full-time position.

FEMA must hire more permanent full-time employees who are emergency management safety and program management professionals hired for their skills and expertise.

An accounting of the number of Stafford Act employees who have worked for FEMA in extended, long-term period is also needed. Positions where Stafford Act employees have been employed for a long time should be made into permanent full-time positions.

FEMA is unable to keep in-house talent at the agency. Stafford Act employees do not have full union rights or protections which help improve workplace safety, labor management relations, and communications in the workplace.

When Stafford Act employees experience issues in the workplace they often feel as though they have little to no rights. FEMA should create a path to a permanent full-time employment for Stafford Act employees so that all employees have equal workplace rights and ensure FEMA is more disaster-ready.

Again, I would like to thank the committee for asking me here today and inviting me. It is a true honor.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Reaves follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEVE REAVES

MARCH 13, 2019

Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, and Members of the subcommittee, my name is Steve Reaves and I am the president of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE) Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Local 4060, which represents over 3,000 Federal and District of Columbia permanent full-time employees. In the aftermath of the most active disaster season in recent history, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on FEMA's emergency management and preparedness. Today I will talk about three workforce issues that if improved would strengthen FEMA's ability to carry out its emergency management and preparedness responsibilities: Recruitment, hiring, and retention.

FEMA employees work to make victims whole again after natural and human-created disasters. We are first responders, but we stay on the ground, sometimes for months or years, to ensure that the Americans affected by natural and human-made disasters can return to normalcy and rebuild their lives. We are the urban search-and-rescue officers who search for survivors and non-survivors in burning cars and flooded homes. We are the safety officers who ensure downed power lines do not electrocute survivors and toxins in flood waters do not infect communities. FEMA firefighters and police officers work hand-in-hand with State and local emergency management agencies to ensure crime is mitigated and fires do not harm survivors. We are the claims adjusters who work to make victims whole after their homes have been destroyed. We are the logisticians who compile data and predict when and where future disasters will occur. We are the grant and contract officers who ensure needs are met in the aftermath of destruction.

The last 5 years have been historically active for FEMA's disaster response. Our members responded to hundreds of disasters, including the recent tornadoes in Alabama; Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas; Hurricane Irma off the coast of Florida; Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico; Hurricane Michael, Tropical Cyclones in the Pacific Northwest in Sai Pan, historic wildfires in California; the eruption of the Kilauea volcano in Hawaii; and flooding in Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

I came to FEMA as a 23-year Army veteran because of FEMA's mission to reduce the loss of life and property and protect our institutions from all hazards. I was deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Somalia. In the Army, I learned a lot about the importance of maintaining high morale and team building and I brought those lessons with me to FEMA. Both are essential to maximize performance and are particularly critical in times of crisis. I, and most of my colleagues, agree that FEMA's mission is too important to let the agency go without the resources needed to serve, help, and protect the American public. Now, allow me to address the top three workplace obstacles to improving emergency management and preparedness I mentioned: (1) Recruitment, (2) hiring, and (3) retention.

To improve emergency management and preparedness we must improve how FEMA recruits qualified candidates. Candidates for employment wait too long to receive a security clearance for employment at FEMA. This backlog of security clearances is a significant obstacle when trying to recruit qualified candidates.

For example, FEMA struggles to recruit firefighters and police officers at Mount Weather Emergency Operations Center in Bluemont, Virginia because of the delayed security clearance process and is understaffed and currently has a deficit of firefighters and police officers. Their schedules are erratic, and their leave requests are denied because of the low staffing levels. The Mount Weather Emergency Operations Center is used as a major relocation site for the highest level of civilian and military officials in case of National disaster. Firefighters and police officers are wary to apply because they know their security clearance process is so lengthy.

If more permanent full-time security background investigators were hired to process security clearances at FEMA, more firefighters and police officers could be onboarded at Mount Weather and elsewhere. If FEMA hired more qualified and experienced permanent full-time employees, the agency would be better able to recruit the workers needed.

FEMA employees are hired through a rigorous, competitive, merit-based examination process that includes application of veteran's preference. The number of permanent full-time employees needed to carry out successful emergency management and

preparedness cannot be short-changed. Our employees are over-worked, under-resourced, under-staffed, and frequently deployed to disaster zones without adequate recuperation time. Permanent full-time employees are outnumbered at FEMA by non-permanent employees. In 1988 the Stafford Act created two sets of non-permanent employees to be hired during disasters: These include (1) Cadre of On-Call Recovery/Response Employees (CORE) and (2) Disaster Response Workers (DRW) Temporary Workers. CORE and DRW employees are brought on using an expedited hiring process during disasters. For purposes of this testimony I will refer to CORE and DRW employees as Stafford Act employees.

Stafford Act employees are used to supplement permanent employees, which too often results in vacancies for permanent full-time positions going unfilled for extensive periods of time. The agency keeps Stafford Act employees on for much longer than their 2- to 4-year contracts. Stafford Act employees should be deployed to disaster zones for a specified amount of time to respond to a specific disaster. These positions were not designed to work with or replace permanent full-time employees on non-disaster work; however, because there is such a need for permanent full-time employees at FEMA, it is not uncommon for Stafford Act employees to work outside of their job descriptions.

Additional funding and resources are needed for more permanent full-time staff. Identifying permanent full-time vacancies would help improve FEMA emergency management and preparedness and would allow FEMA to hire the number of permanent full-time staff that is truly needed. A "desk audit" is needed to accurately calculate the number of permanent full-time current employees and determine where additional permanent full-time employees are needed to address emergency management and preparedness.

Some Stafford Act employees have been working at FEMA for much longer than their designated employment period. Some have worked longer than 10 years in Stafford Act positions. The agency continues to transfer their contracts to new disasters without giving them a permanent full-time position. There are discrepancies with regard to the agency's count of the number of permanent full-time employees that FEMA needs. Stafford Act employees are, in effect, permanently filling vacant permanent positions. Stafford Act employees are filling vacant permanent positions without the benefits and rights of Title 5 permanent full-time employees. Permanent full-time employees need to be hired for these vacancies. These employees have on-the-job experience and should be afforded the opportunity to apply for permanent positions when they become available. FEMA must hire more permanent full-time employees who are emergency management, safety, and program management professionals hired for their skills and expertise.

An accounting of the number of Stafford Act employees who have worked at FEMA for an extended long-term period is also needed. Positions where Stafford Act employees have been employed for a long time should be made into permanent full-time positions.

FEMA is unable to keep in-house talent at the agency. Stafford Act employees do not have full union rights and protections which help improve workplace safety, labor management relations and communication in the workplace. When Stafford Act employees experience issues in the workplace, they often feel as though they have little to no rights. Title 5 permanent full-time employees do have these workplace rights and protections and work with the union to help them ensure that they have what is needed for them to successfully fulfill their job duties with dignity and respect. The union cannot represent most Stafford Act employees when they experience workplace discrimination and harassment.

FEMA should create a path toward permanent full-time employment for Stafford Act employees, so that all agency employees have workplace rights and ensure that FEMA is more disaster ready.

To improve emergency management and preparedness more permanent full-time employees must be hired. Robust funding is needed to address the on-going recruitment and retention issues. Too much is at stake for American families across the Nation to allow anything less.

This concludes my statement. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Reaves.

I now recognize Mr. Senterfitt to summarize his statement, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF CHIEF MARTIN “MARTY” SENTERFITT, FIRE  
DEPUTY CHIEF & DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT,  
MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

Chief SENTERFITT. Thank you Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, and Members of the subcommittee for holding this hearing today.

I am Martin Senterfitt, the director of emergency management for Monroe County, the Florida Keys.

I am pleased to be here to address coordination issues between FEMA and County Emergency Management programs and to perhaps offer a solution to improve our future and interactions.

As we examine these issues and concerns, I want to first recognize the incredible work being done within FEMA.

I could spend hours recounting positive stories of FEMA successes and the incredible dedication and hard work of its employees.

But I recognize today’s discussion is focused on improvement, and my time is limited. Therefore, I will move forward and speak on an issue I feel is important—the relationship dynamics between FEMA and local emergency management.

A major role of FEMA is to expedite funding to disaster-impacted areas. We all recognize the necessity of fiscal oversight to prevent waste and fraud. Unfortunately, this oversight occurs months or years after the disaster by persons sitting in an office.

These individuals have limited context as to the environment in which these decisions were made, or the extenuating circumstances that may have existed.

Because of this lack of awareness, these individuals may then make subjective decisions to deny reimbursements, which then begins this chain reaction of appeals and delays, legal fees, and stress.

Fortunately, in many of these circumstances, the two parties are often able to work to a positive solution as high-level executives are engaged to have authority within FEMA to use discretion and common sense, and make case-by-case rulings.

Unfortunately, this means reimbursement is delayed months or years, and the impacted county is forced to pay interest on loans and face fiscal challenges while it is recovering from a disaster.

Recognizing the need of oversight, I suggest we engage a solution that is already right in front of us.

FEMA often inserts a FEMA representative into the local emergency operation center, who then ride out the storm with us and report situational awareness updates to the FEMA structure.

Unfortunately, this person is often limited by FEMA process and policy, as to what they can say or what they can suggest. They observe, but do not actively participate.

In my opinion, after watching many FEMA employees interact in disaster environments, it appears ground-level FEMA employees are not allowed to give suggestions or in any way commit FEMA to action. This is, perhaps, due to a hypersensitivity to the liability or fear of overcommitting.

Most issues must be pushed up the chain and then waited for a decision or answer.

But let me emphasize. These FEMA employees are highly competent and capable of providing local communities priceless advice and input. But it appears they are limited by organizational culture and policies in a top-down management structure.

Imagine a different scenario. FEMA inserts a highly-trained employee into the local EOC that partners with the county emergency manager and provides advice, input, and a second set of eyes to evaluate the decisions being made.

Fiscal oversight can occur real-time during the disaster, and the FEMA representative will have full awareness of the environment in which these decisions are being made.

Let me emphasize. Potential mistakes can be prevented, instead of appealed. Once concurrence is reached, both parties can sign off and our first level of oversight is complete.

A State employee can also be added to this process, which will allow concurrence at the local, State, and Federal level. This solution provides a sounding board for the local emergency manager, and should provide enough oversight to expedite the reimbursement process.

In my EOC, I require that all local agencies provide individuals who have the authority to act on behalf of their agencies. That is what makes an EOC effective. I want the same level of commitment from FEMA.

If we implement this change, I will have a FEMA partner in my EOC, not a FEMA observer. Mistakes can be avoided, not disputed years later.

I thank you for your time, and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Chief Senterfitt follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARTIN "MARTY" SENTERFITT

MARCH 13, 2019

#### INTRODUCTION

Thank you Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, and Members of this subcommittee for holding this hearing today. I am Martin Senterfitt, the director of emergency management for Monroe County, Florida—the Florida Keys. I am pleased to be here to address coordination issues between FEMA and County Emergency Management programs and to offer a solution to improve our future interactions.

As we examine these issues and concerns I want to first recognize the incredible work being done within FEMA. I could spend hours recounting positive stories of FEMA successes and the incredible dedication and hard work of its employees, but I recognize today's discussion is focused on improvement and my time is limited, therefore I will move forward and speak on an issue I feel is important; the relationship dynamics between FEMA and local emergency management.

A major role of FEMA is to expedite funding to disaster impact areas. We all recognize the necessity of fiscal oversight to prevent waste and fraud. Unfortunately, this oversight occurs months or years after the disaster by persons sitting in an office. These individuals have limited context as to the environment in which the decisions were made or the extenuating circumstances that may have existed. Because of this lack of awareness, these individuals may then make subjective decisions to deny reimbursements which then begins a chain reaction of appeals and delays, legal fees, and stress.

Fortunately, in many of these circumstances, the two parties are often able to work to a positive solution as higher-level executives are engaged who have the authority to use discretion and common sense and make case-by-case rulings. Unfortunately, this means reimbursement is delayed months or years and the impacted

county is forced to pay interest on loans and face fiscal challenges while it is recovering from a disaster.

Recognizing the need for oversight, I suggest we engage a solution that is already right in front of us. FEMA often inserts a FEMA representative into the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC), who ride out the storm with us and then reports situational awareness updates to the FEMA structure. Unfortunately, this person is often limited by FEMA process and policy as to what they can say or suggest. They observe but do not actively participate.

In my opinion, after watching many FEMA employees interact in disaster environments, ground-level FEMA employees are not allowed to give suggestions or in any way commit FEMA to action. This is perhaps due to a hyper-sensitivity to liability or fear of over-committing. Most issues must be pushed up the chain and then wait for a decision or answer. But let me emphasize, these FEMA employees are highly competent and capable of providing local communities' priceless advice and input, but it appears they are limited by organizational culture and policies and a top-down management structure.

Imagine a different scenario . . .

FEMA inserts a highly-trained employee into the local EOC that partners with the County Emergency Manager and provides advice, input, and a second set of eyes to evaluate the decisions being made. Fiscal oversight can occur real-time, during the event, and the FEMA representative will have full awareness of the environment in which the decisions are being made. Let me emphasize, potential mistakes can be prevented instead of appealed. Once concurrence is reached, both parties can sign off and our first level of oversight is complete. A State employee can also be added to this process which will allow concurrence at the local, State, and Federal level. This solution provides a sounding board for the local emergency manager and should provide enough oversight to expedite the reimbursement process.

In my EOC I require that all local agencies to provide individuals who have the authority to act on their agencies' behalf. That is what makes an EOC effective. I want the same level of commitment from FEMA.

If we implement this change I will have a FEMA partner in my EOC, not an FEMA observer, and mistakes can be avoided, not disputed years later.

I thank you for your time and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you for your testimony.

I now recognize Chief Waters to summarize his statement, for 5 minutes.

#### **STATEMENT OF CHIEF JAMES R. WATERS, COUNTERTERRORISM, NYPD**

Chief WATERS. Good afternoon, Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, Member Rose, and Members of the committee. I am James Waters, chief of the Counterterrorism Bureau of the New York City Police Department.

On behalf of Police Commissioner O'Neill and Mayor de Blasio, I am pleased to testify before your subcommittee to discuss emergency preparedness, as well as how our partnerships and the funding you and your colleagues appropriate, has supported the NYPD's efforts to secure New York City.

I believe we would all agree that the concept of emergency preparedness should not imply a reactive posture.

With more than 38 years of service to the NYPD, including 16 years overseeing our counterterrorism operations, I can tell you with the highest degree of certainty that the NYPD does not take such an approach.

Our fundamental belief is that the emergency preparedness is driven by the proactive posture aimed at preventing an attack and building resilience into everything we do.

Our ability to do this is a direct result of successful collaboration with our Federal partners and the significant funding that the Federal Government provides our city.

Funding that, eliminated, reduced or, frankly, not increased, will result in an erosion of our capabilities, termination of many of our initiatives that I will talk about today, and a significant limitation of our overall preparedness posture.

The NYPD relies on Federal funding to strengthen emergency preparedness in many important ways. This funding staffs our counterterrorism and intelligence bureaus, and purchases critical detection and response equipment, like vapor wake dogs.

It places radiation and chemical sensors in fixed and mobile locations, in order to find radioactive materials before they reach our city limits.

It provides comprehensive training and safety equipment to our offices responding to CBRN attacks, as well as active-shooter incidents. Those are just a few examples of the key counterterrorism priorities and strategies.

The bureau which I oversee has wide-ranging responsibilities. It is comprised of specialized personnel and assets dedicated to preventing acts of terrorism or mass casualty events in New York City.

To this end, the Bureau conducts extensive planning, training, and operational coordination within the NYPD and its security partners, including deploying highly-skilled critical response command teams, and advanced threat detection technologies across the city.

Our intergovernmental partnerships are significant. We are part of the joint terrorism task force, spearhead initiatives like Operation Sentry, and a part of the Securing the Cities initiative, funded by the Department of Homeland Security and aimed at protecting against a radiological attack, like a dirty bomb.

Our private-sector partnerships are unmatched. These joint ventures support our Federally-funded Domain Awareness System, or DAS.

This system receives data from real-time sensors, including radiological and chemical sensors—information from 9–1–1 calls, and one-way live feed from CCTV cameras, and allows us to view countless locations around the city from one centralized location.

Our private-sector partners number approximately 20,000, and as part of an initiative called NYPD Shield, represent almost every sector of industry.

We provide information to private-sector partners to help them secure their facilities and employees. In turn, they share information and access to help us secure the city.

We continue to see greater funding levels that are commensurate with the unique position in which New York City finds itself, at the top of the terrorist target list.

In the 17 years since September 11, the NYPD and our partners have uncovered over 2 dozen terrorist plots against the city. In most cases, they have been thwarted by the efforts of the NYPD and the FBI JTTF.

However, we are not able to stop all of them. Tragedies, such as the West Side Highway vehicle-ramming attack, the Chelsea bomb-

ing, and the subway bombing are examples of continuing need to improve and expand our counterterrorism apparatus.

Port and transportation, homeland security grants, have not been increased for years, which could also counter terror—I am sorry—counterterrorism apparatus.

The threat is ever-present. But as we have seen over the past several years, it is also dynamic and becoming increasingly decentralized. Thus, harder to detect.

As the nature of the threat changes, so must our response. With additional funding above the current levels, the NYPD would be able to enhance a proactive posture by expanding intelligence-gathering capabilities, increasing deployments in critical areas, purchasing and employing cutting-edge technology, expanding collaboration and partnerships, all to strengthen its emergency response capabilities.

We are facing a new and, potentially, lethal threat, one that the NYPD is prohibited from effectively countering.

Though we have not yet seen it here in the United States, terror groups, such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, have incorporated unmanned aircraft systems, or drones in battle overseas.

The NYPD recommends amending the Federal Code to allow State and local governments to purchase jamming technology for use against drones in select circumstances with proper oversight.

Recently DHS and DOJ were empowered by law to use such technology. However, our Federal partners simply do not have the resources to ensure the level of coverage for New York City.

The NYPD is ready, willing, and able to deploy this option if given the authority, and will train select members of the department to respond swiftly anywhere in the 5 boroughs. Mere moments of delay could mean the difference between successfully stopping an attack or catastrophe.

At the NYPD, our philosophy is simple. We have to gather the best intelligence available, utilize the most up-to-date technology, expand partnerships, take proactive measures to identify and neutralize threats, and react to natural disasters and other mass-scale events in a manner which ensures public safety and prevents the loss of life, all while remaining committed to protecting individual liberties.

Over 17 years since September 11, New York City enjoys the distinction of being the safest big city in America. It is also commercially vibrant, culturally diverse, and free.

We can claim these successes are due in no small measure, to the approximately 58,000 uniformed and civilian members of the New York City Police Department, the partnerships we have built and the assistance we receive from the Federal Government, which has proven itself a vital partner in the face of an ever-present threat.

Thank you again for your opportunity to testify here today, sir. I am happy to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of Chief Waters follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES R. WATERS

MARCH 13, 2019

Good afternoon Chair Payne, Ranking Member King, Member Rose, and Members of the subcommittee. I am James Waters, chief of the Counterterrorism Bureau of

the New York Police Department (NYPD). On behalf of Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill and Mayor Bill de Blasio, I am pleased to testify before your subcommittee to discuss emergency preparedness as well as how our partnerships and the funding you and your colleagues appropriate has supported the NYPD's efforts to secure New York City.

I believe we would all agree that the concept of emergency preparedness should not imply a reactive posture. We cannot take a posture that accepts there is nothing we can do to prevent an attack and instead should merely prepare for the inevitability of it happening and how we should respond. With more than 16 years of experience overseeing NYPD's counterterrorism operations, first as the commanding officer of the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) then as chief of counterterrorism, I can tell you with the highest degree of certainty that the NYPD does not take such an approach. While we leverage every one of our resources and partnerships to train and equip our personnel and ready our city for man-made and natural catastrophes, our fundamental belief is that emergency preparedness is driven by a proactive posture aimed at preventing an attack on our city and building resilience into our policies, procedures, people, and infrastructure. However, there should be no mistaking it: Whether proactive or reactive, our ability to prevent or be adequately prepared for catastrophic events is dependent in no small part on our successful collaboration with our Federal partners and the significant funding which the Federal Government provides our city. Funding that, if eliminated, reduced, or frankly not increased, will result in an erosion of our capabilities, cessation of many of the initiatives that I will talk about today, and a significant limitation of our overall emergency preparedness posture.

Although New York City has become the safest big city in the Nation, it remains the primary target of violent extremists, both foreign and home-grown. The attacks of September 11, 2001, forever changed how the NYPD views its mission, and following that tragedy, the Department recognized that we must be an active participant in preventing terrorist attacks. Soon after that horrific attack, the NYPD became the first police department in the country to develop its own robust counterterrorism infrastructure, operating throughout the city, country, and the world to develop intelligence and techniques to combat this ever-evolving threat and bolstering our ability to respond to these attacks and other mass-scale emergency events. Vital to this effort has been collaboration and information sharing with other city and State agencies, neighboring States, the private sector and, especially, the Federal Government.

We have worked meticulously to build this investigative and emergency response infrastructure, while protecting and upholding the Constitutional rights and liberties accorded to those who live, work, and visit New York City—but we recognize that the specter of an attack is always looming. In the last 17 years, the NYPD and our partners have uncovered over 2 dozen terrorist plots against our city. In most cases, they have been thwarted by the efforts of the NYPD and the FBI-NYPD JTTF.

Tragically, we could not stop all of them. In September 2016, an individual inspired by al-Qaeda set off home-made pressure cooker bombs in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan and in Seaside Park, New Jersey, injuring 30 people. Multiple additional unexploded devices were subsequently discovered. This case highlights that although our proactive efforts could not prevent this attack, our reactive preparedness resulted in the immediate activation of partnerships and plans that quickly located the perpetrator and the other devices before more havoc could be wreaked. Collaboration between the FBI, ATF, our New Jersey partners, and the NYPD, among others, led to this individual's capture and he is currently serving multiple life sentences.

On October 31, 2017, an ISIS-inspired extremist used a rented truck to mow down innocent cyclists and pedestrians on the West Side Highway running path in Manhattan and near Ground Zero, killing 8. The collaboration between the NYPD and the FBI led to a fruitful investigation which resulted in Federal charges of lending support to a terrorist organization, in addition to murder charges. This individual will be tried later this year. In December 2017, an ISIS-inspired extremist attempted a suicide bombing when he set off a home-made explosive device at the Port Authority Bus Terminal subway station in Manhattan that injured 3 individuals and himself. Once again, the collaboration between the NYPD and its State and Federal partners resulted in a successful investigation which led to a guilty verdict. Most recently, between October 22 and November 2 of last year, an individual sent explosive devices through the mail to numerous elected officials and high-profile private citizens, in addition to a news outlet. This attack spanned States up and down the East Coast and as far west as California. We are grateful that there was no loss of life as a result of this incident, and proud of the coordinated effort that

included law enforcement from multiple localities, States and the Federal Government that located all of the devices, and which resulted in the capture of the individual responsible. These attacks strengthen our resolve to prevent future carnage.

The NYPD's Critical Response Command (CRC) is one of our first lines of defense against any threat. An elite squad, with officers trained in special weapons, long guns, explosive trace detection, and radiological and nuclear awareness, who regularly respond quickly to any potential terrorist attack across the city, including active-shooter incidents. This team, which is central to the Counterterrorism Bureau's proactive counterterrorism mission, conducts daily deployments, saturating high probability targets with a uniformed presence aimed at disrupting terrorist planning operations and deterring and preventing attacks. But the Counterterrorism Bureau has a mandate broader than the CRC's operations: The Bureau has wide-ranging responsibilities that include designing and implementing large-scale counterterrorism projects; conducting counterterrorism training for the entire patrol force and other law enforcement agencies; identifying critical infrastructure sites and developing protective strategies for such sites; researching, testing and developing plans for the use of emerging technologies used to detect and combat chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive weapons; developing systems and programs to increase harbor security, which includes the pro-active deployment and mapping of background radiation in the Port of New York and New Jersey; and interfacing with the NYC Office of Emergency Management, which coordinates the city's response to mass-scale events.

Our emergency prevention apparatus is not limited to the important work that our dedicated professionals conduct each day. We frequently work with other Government agencies to help protect our city. Most notably, the NYPD is a member of the Joint Terrorism Task Force, led by the FBI, which combines the resources of multiple law enforcement agencies to investigate and prevent terrorist attacks. Additional initiatives include Operation SENTRY, which consists of regular meetings with law enforcement agencies from around the country in order to share information and training techniques, and to pursue joint investigative avenues. At last count there are 275 participating law enforcement partners. Law enforcement in this country cannot be content to merely focus on activity in their own jurisdictions. Terrorist plots can be planned on-line or discussed in one part of the country and executed in another. This is especially the case with attacks that are perpetrated by those inspired to act by terrorist groups, rather than receiving information, instructions, or directions from them (also known commonly as "directed" attacks). Information silos can be deadly and Operation SENTRY is designed to breakdown walls between jurisdictions.

The NYPD also participates in Multi-Agency Super Surges which are joint operations to focus manpower at sensitive transit locations conducted with Port Authority Police, Amtrak Police, MTA Police, New Jersey Transit Police, the FBI, TSA, and the National Guard SHIELD Group. These collaborative efforts also include the Securing the Cities Initiative, which is a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funded initiative between the NYPD and regional law enforcement partners to protect against a radiological attack like a "dirty bomb". As a part of this effort, radiation detection equipment was installed in neighboring jurisdictions and at key points of entry into the 5 boroughs so that the city is virtually ringed with a radiological alarm system. Additionally, the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) certified a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) at NYPD Headquarters that supports Classified information sharing integral to the NYPD's counterterror mission. We also have personnel from I&A assigned to New York City in addition to a DHS special security officer assigned full-time to manage SCIF operations. The DHS intelligence analyst assigned to the NYPD sits with our Intelligence Bureau's cadre of intelligence research specialists and proactively shares DHS and intelligence community information with the NYPD. This has resulted in leads for existing investigations, new investigations being opened, and two joint finished intelligence products over the past year alone. Our civilian intelligence research specialists, who are also funded by DHS, work hand-in-hand with our uniformed members to detect and disrupt threats to the city, in addition to providing critical strategic intelligence analysis.

In addition to partnerships with the Federal Government, other States and localities, and foreign governments, we have increasingly partnered with the private sector. These partnerships are instrumental. Our public-private initiatives, interconnected yet distinct, begin with our Federally-funded Domain Awareness System (DAS), which receives data from real-time sensors, including radiological and chemical sensors, ShotSpotter, information from 9-1-1 calls, and live feeds from CCTV cameras around the city. Not all of these cameras are city-owned or -operated. In fact, most of them are not. They belong to private entities that have chosen to part-

ner with us, providing encrypted one-way access to their cameras as well as other information, in our collective effort to keep the city and its millions of inhabitants safe. This information, including camera feeds, can also be accessed by NYPD officers on their Department-issued mobile devices in real time.

The Lower Manhattan Security Initiative and the Midtown Manhattan Security Initiative are the backbones of DAS, and are great examples of additional steps the NYPD takes, in partnership with the private sector. Lower Manhattan and Midtown Manhattan contain many of the country's most attractive locations for attacks, and businesses located within these sensitive areas have allowed us to access their cameras, technology, and security personnel as force multipliers, allowing the NYPD to better prevent terrorist attacks. This collaboration includes Operation Nexus, where the NYPD works with businesses throughout the Nation to provide them with information to help them identify suspicious transactions that may be linked to terrorist plots. Our private-sector partnerships also includes an initiative called NYPD SHIELD, which established a two-way line of communication and information sharing between the NYPD and approximately 20,000 private-sector members from businesses and organizations throughout the country, representing almost every sector of industry and Government. The information we share enables us to better secure our city and allows businesses, both individually and collectively as industries, to enhance their own security.

The NYPD relies on Federal funding to protect New York City against terrorist attacks and to strengthen emergency preparedness, including the security of critical transportation and port infrastructure. This funding has helped staff our counterterrorism and intelligence bureaus and purchase critical detection and response equipment. It allows the Department to purchase, train, and deploy vapor wake dogs, who are able to detect explosive particles. In addition, it enables us to place radiation and chemical sensors in fixed high-profile locations and in a variety of mobile conveyances in order to expand our coverage to include likely points and paths of entry for these dangerous materials; this allows us to find radioactive material before they ever reach our city limits. These appropriations have also made it possible to provide comprehensive training and safety equipment to our officers responding to explosive, chemical, biological, and radiological incidents, as well as training officers to respond to active-shooter incidents so they can engage and end coordinated terrorist attacks. This vital funding also provides critical instruction to officers in life-saving techniques that can be implemented during an on-going attack, in the effort to save lives before it is safe enough for medical personnel to enter an active crime scene.

The support we receive from the Federal Government in the form of funding, as well as our relationships with our Federal law enforcement partners have been and continues to be invaluable. However, we continue to seek greater funding levels that are commensurate with the unique position in which New York City finds itself—at the top of the terrorist target list. The identification of plots targeting our city is becoming increasingly challenging as we are seeing more and more attackers becoming inspired rather than directed. Extremist groups are increasingly using this cost-efficient method to recruit, educate, and operationalize their deadly agenda. The traditional terrorist recruitment, training and plotting framework, where sympathizers would be identified and brought to established locations around the globe for training and where terror plots were conceived, prepared, and operationalized, is quickly being substituted. These locations are becoming less commonplace. Instead, the internet is used to identify, influence, train, and instruct recruits. This emerging and expanding decentralized methodology is making it increasingly more difficult for law enforcement to identify and detect radicalized individuals, terror plots in their planning stages and networks of conspirators, as plots are hatched and attacks carried out by lone wolves. With additional funding above and beyond the current levels, the NYPD could enhance its proactive, preventative posture by expanding its intelligence-gathering capabilities, increasing deployments in critical areas of the city, purchasing and employing the most current and cutting-edge technology, enhancing and expanding its collaborative efforts, as well as continuing to develop its emergency response capabilities in the event a tragic incident occurs.

While I have outlined the various steps the NYPD takes to address the constant threat to our city and to manage emergencies, there is one threat that has emerged which has the potential of being lethal and which the Department is prohibited from effectively countering as a matter of Federal law. Though we have yet to see it here in the United States, terror groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda have incorporated unmanned aircraft systems, or drones, in battle overseas. As we have seen this past December in London, where illegal drone flights brought an entire airport to a standstill for 17 hours, when we are unable to disable or disrupt a drone posing a threat, we are at its mercy.

Currently, Federal law prohibits State and local governments from using technology that could be used to jam a drone's signal. Additionally, current law provides no pathway for State or local governments to apply to the FCC for an exception from this prohibition. The NYPD recommends amending Title 47 of the Federal Code to allow State and local governments to purchase jamming technology to use against unmanned aircraft systems in select circumstances with proper oversight. Recently, DHS and the Department of Justice (DOJ) were empowered by law to use such technology. However, our DHS and DOJ partners simply do not have the resources to ensure the level of geographic coverage New York City requires against this threat, no matter their best efforts. The difficulty that DHS and DOJ will have responding to this threat in NYC is magnified in places where they do not have permanent field offices. The NYPD is ready, willing, and able to deploy this option if given the authority. Select members of the NYPD could be trained in its use and ready to respond swiftly anywhere in the 5 boroughs. Mere moments of delay could mean the difference between successfully stopping an attack and catastrophe.

Given that we are all here to speak about emergency preparedness, I wish to highlight a vital component to any such preparation and response: Effective communication systems that enable our first responders to communicate. To this end I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to talk about the T-Band and how vitally important it is to the NYPD and its regional law enforcement and emergency response partners, and first responders Nation-wide. Aside from large-scale natural disasters and terrorist attacks, such as Hurricane Sandy and the September 11 attacks, the Department receives nearly 10 million 9-1-1 calls annually and patrols approximately 306 square miles of some of the most densely-populated geography in the Nation. The T-Band is a portion of the spectrum used in New York City and the surrounding region to support critical communication and provide regional interoperability among first responders. The NYPD and its regional partners have spent years and hundreds of millions of local, State, and Federal dollars to build and improve these T-Band networks, including in the subway and train tunnels in and around the city, the largest such tunnel system in the world. Under current law, portions of the T-Band will be auctioned off to private interests beginning in 2021. This would squeeze first responders into smaller and smaller sections of the band, even as the demand on the band continues to increase. To be blunt, this would be catastrophic to public safety and emergency readiness and response. There is no viable alternative spectrum available for us to move to. For example, the entire New York City subway system is wired for T-Band and, learning from 9/11, the New York City building code now requires all new high-rise construction to be wired for T-Band as well. Cell phones do not allow the same type of immediate, multi-point communication that a police radio does. Even if there were a viable alternative, it would take years and billions of dollars to build up another communication infrastructure alongside the existing T-Band infrastructure. We would then have to seamlessly transfer all communications to the new system wholesale without a break in service, which would be, to put it lightly, next to impossible. And, given all of this, we would not even be able to guarantee it would work nearly as well as the T-Band systems we have spent years perfecting. On behalf of the NYPD, the FDNY, and the city of New York, we urge the House to pass the Don't Break Up the T-Band Act of 2019.

Additionally, while we certainly are encouraged by steps taken by the FCC to improve the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system, we urge the FCC to adopt rules that better allow us to respond to the full range of modern emergency scenarios, from hurricanes to terrorist attacks. When the city issued a WEA notification regarding the Chelsea Bomber in 2016 to every phone in the 5 boroughs, the millions of New Yorkers who wanted to help were merely given several lines of text with no picture. In this age of instant access to visual information via social media, we need to enhance our ability to rapidly and securely deliver comprehensive emergency information, including images, to the public. This information must come from a trusted source, like WEA, before unverified or incorrect information is shared widely on social media networks, sowing further confusion and panic. Pictures provide instant recognition and speak a universal language. They enable rapid response from every potential witness who could save lives through fast action. The lack of an ability to disseminate photographs and other multimedia highlights a weakness in the system. In the face of emerging threats, we need to remain on technology's cutting edge by using public information systems to their fullest capacity and, where necessary, improving those capabilities. In addition, as the nature of emergencies is their lack of predictability, the city continues to strongly urge Congress to eliminate the ability for mobile phone customers to opt out of WEA messages. Our Nation's threat environment has changed dramatically since the creation

of WEA in 2006 and local public safety officials must have the unfettered ability to reach our constituents at a moment's notice.

At the NYPD, our philosophy is simple: We have to gather the best intelligence available, utilize the most up-to-date technology, expand our partnerships, take proactive measures to identify and neutralize threats, and react to natural disasters and other mass-scale events in a manner which ensures public safety and prevents the loss of life, all while remaining committed to protecting individual liberties.

Over 17 years after September 11, 2001, New York City enjoys the distinction of being the safest big city in America. It is also commercially vibrant, culturally diverse, and free. We can claim these successes are due, in no small measure, to the approximately 58,000 uniformed and civilian members of the New York City Police Department, the partnerships we have built, and the assistance we receive from the Federal Government, which has proven itself a vital partner in the face of an ever-present threat.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. PAYNE. I would like to thank all the witnesses for their testimony, and remind each Member that he or she will have 5 minutes to question the panel.

I now recognize myself for questions.

Major Bucchere and Mr. Senterfitt, I want to ask you about a very troubling article last week from NPR that described how Federal disaster aid increases inequality after a disaster and how higher-income areas receive more aid than lower-income areas after a disaster.

Another NPR story pointed to the Federal buy-outs of flood-prone properties that have been concentrated in majority white districts, even though disasters and flooding affect everyone?

Can you describe efforts that New Jersey takes on the State level, and Monroe County takes on a local level, to make sure that disaster recovery happens equitably across communities and low-income individuals and aren't being left behind?

Major BUCCHERE. Yes, sir. In New Jersey, NJOEM takes a whole-community approach to all phases of emergency management. Prior to a disaster, we do several things to ensure that all communities are taken into account.

We ensure that all 21 counties have a hazard mitigation plan. That county hazard mitigation plan is paid for with grant funding, without which the county and local municipalities would be ineligible for hazard mitigation funding at all.

Some of the other things that we have done is, we have distributed over 400 generators across all 21 counties and over 400 municipalities for power restoration across all communities.

Last, we have re-engaged our community emergency response teams, which has proven vital, dispensing over 120 community emergency response team trailers, training 27,000 people and have a core group of 10,000 to help all walks of life.

In regards to home buy-outs and elevations, New Jersey takes a risk-based approach, based on 3 criteria: Severe, repetitive loss, repetitive loss, and substantial damage.

As a home rule State, each municipality decides the direction that they want to go in. Some municipalities take elevations in order to keep their tax base. Some prefer home buy-outs.

One of the proactive things that has just happened in the State of New Jersey under Governor Murphy is, he has enacted the Office of Environmental Justice under the Department of Environmental Protection.

They are a critical key emergency management partner with us, and we have begun to engage in meetings to ensure the fair treatment of all people, and to give all communities a voice.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

Senterfitt.

Chief SENTERFITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In Monroe County, we recognize the simple reality that disasters do have an adverse impact on the poorer populations of the community. That is directly related to the diminishing value of a dollar.

If you, you know, if you only have \$1,000, and you take a \$1,000 impact, it changes your world. If you have \$100,000 and you take a \$1,000 impact, it is not as much of an impact. We recognize that.

So we focus heavily on the poorest parts of our community. We have made sure that that is where we have placed our focus.

We have opened a long-term recovery group with, not only the Government, but all of our non-profit partners, to make sure that we are digging into those needs to find out what is necessary and how we get these individuals back, you know, back to a reasonable level of life.

In Monroe County we have seen a major impact on our workforce housing. Quite often, it is your workforce that is living at the ground level of these multi-story houses. When we receive 4, 6, 10 feet of water in the Florida Keys, it was the workforce housing that flooded out.

These were the people that had the adverse impact. That is where we have been putting our focus and energy.

I can say that FEMA has been right there with us the whole time, working with us, making sure that these needs are met. This is a conscious thought in the forefront of our minds, to make sure we are fair and equitable.

Mr. PAYNE. OK. From the two of you, do you think there is anything FEMA could do to improve disaster relief for low-income individuals very quickly?

Chief SENTERFITT. If I may, part of the—I read the NPR articles. Part of the challenge that I found with them is, they are comparing, not even apples to oranges, but apples to footballs.

On one hand, they talk about the repetitive flood loss programs, but at the same time, they try to turn around and talk about assistance, rental housing. It is two totally different products.

That I have seen, FEMA is doing everything they possibly can to be fair and equitable. But different programs are going to impact different communities.

Repetitive flood loss is going to be more advantageous to the homeowner versus the renter. Whereas, temporary sheltering assistance is pretty much a process that only those that are at the lower economic scales are going to benefit from.

So, I think, just to be careful, we have to look at all the programs individually. I think there is more research that needs to be done on this to make sure that we are not missing the boat somewhere.

Mr. PAYNE. OK. Thank you.

I yield to the gentleman from New York, Mr. King.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we saw with Sandy, and also if there is ever another terrorist attack in Manhattan, basically, New York and New Jersey are one region.

So, I would just ask Chief Waters and Major Bucchere, how much cooperation is there between New York and New Jersey, specifically with the NYPD and New Jersey as far as emergency disasters, terrorist attacks, whatever?

Major, do you want to go first?

Major BUCCHERE. Yes, sir. We share a tremendous partner with the State of New York and NYPD, in particular, from the emergency management side of the house from our—and evacuation planning, to our investigative branch or participation in the JTTF, our regional operations and intelligence center and, certainly, our investigative branch.

We feel like our partnership couldn't be stronger. We actively monitor NYPD's posture in preparedness and, also, in response to critical incidents and threats, and often similarly respond on the other side of the river.

We have had several target-hardening operational responses, specifically, some of which occurred during holiday season, where members are going back and forth by rail and ferry across the river.

So again, we share an extremely strong partnership. We embed members into lower Manhattan Security Initiative. We have a streamlined communication. I am glad to report that those partnerships are incredibly strong.

Mr. KING. Chief.

Chief WATERS. Sir, I agree with the other witness. In a word, seamless, sir. The transparency is there. It dates back many years. We work very well with the State police and the local police departments in New Jersey. We have members of the Joint Terrorism Task Force that are on the Newark side of the river working with New Jersey.

We have members of our Intelligence Bureau that are assigned to New Jersey. We worked, going back to the Super Bowl several years ago, we spent quite a bit of time—I spent a year in the planning stages before the Super Bowl in 2014 with the Jersey State Police and all of the partners.

As was already stated, we have members of New Jersey law enforcement in the lower Manhattan security or the Domain Awareness System residence. So it is seamless.

Mr. KING. In New York we have, obviously, Yankee Stadium, Citi Field, Arthur Ashe Stadium, Madison Square Garden. Jersey has MetLife Stadium.

So recently the Dodgers had a drill in Dodgers Stadium. A practiced evacuation of the stands, in case of an attack. So is there anything similar to that, you know, not to give away any trade secrets, but are you prepared for that in New York? Also, will you be prepared for that in New Jersey?

Chief.

Chief WATERS. So we are prepared. We do through a number of different programs in counterterrorism, first through the Shield program and the counterterrorism division.

A lot of training with all of the employees in the private sector but, specifically, to your question, with all the employees of the different venues at sporting arenas, we deploy our critical response command and our strategic response group, highly-trained, heavily-

armed officers to those locations, as well as our elite emergency service unit folks, and the bomb squad, to all of those venues for every event. So we are well-prepared.

Mr. KING. Major.

Major BUCCHERE. I would concur with Chief Waters. We have conducted several iterations of exercises over the years, certainly in preparations for hosting the Super Bowl and since. In addition, staffing MetLife with several members of our special operations section and tactical forces, including our bomb squad.

In addition, we have also brought up the entire detect-and-render-safe taskforce, a Federally grant-funded taskforce combined of explosive detection canine handlers and our bomb squads. And work in conjunction with all of our partners on contraflow and emergency evacuation procedures.

Mr. KING. Give some idea of the commitment, Chief Waters. How many personnel are in counterterrorism in NYPD? How many in the intel unit? How many in JTTF?

Chief WATERS. So the JTTF is the largest partner next to the FBI, with over 100 strong detectives, sergeants, lieutenants, all the way up to deputy chief.

There are 1,000 people in the Counterterrorism Bureau that work each and every day through the bomb squad critical response command, lower Manhattan Security Initiative, the Counterterrorism Division, and the World Trade Center Command.

Additionally, the Intelligence Bureau has just under 1,000 strong, working and spread out throughout the region, not only New York City, but in New Jersey, Connecticut, and elsewhere. And around the world through their liaison program.

Mr. KING. If we have a second round, I will invite you into the issue of drones with you?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. KING. I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. PAYNE. Next we have the gentlelady from Illinois, Ms. Underwood.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you, Chairman Payne, for organizing this hearing on the current state of our Nation's emergency management.

I also want to thank our witnesses for your testimony today and for the work that you do to ensure our communities are better-prepared to respond to emergencies.

I am particularly appreciative of your work, given my experience at the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response at HHS, where I helped to coordinate preparedness and response efforts for natural disasters and emerging infectious diseases and the like—so first let me ask you, Mr. Reaves, right now, do you think you and your co-workers at FEMA have all the resources and support that you need to do your jobs well?

Mr. REAVES. Currently, we have 1,118 vacancies, just staffing vacancies, full-time, permanent full-time staffing vacancies so, of course, that negatively affects our preparedness levels.

Do we have money dedicated to full-time funding? Yes. That is the traditional hurricane preparedness and training scenarios that we run through with our State and local partners every year.

We have a shortened window because of the impact of the furlough and the 36 days of—usually we have from the end of November to the beginning of June to prepare for hurricane season again. Then, on the interim, we have flood season and tornado season between those.

So it has really shortened our window to prepare for hurricane season. We are busting our butts trying to get ready.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Yes, sir. In your testimony, you wrote that this has been the, “most active disaster season in recent history”. Can you tell us what you mean by that?

Mr. REAVES. Yes, ma’am. The previous 5 years it is a better window to look at.

We have been more active as a disaster response agency in the last 5 years than we have the previous 10 prior to that.

We stayed deployed to one disaster or another. There has not been a recovery season, as traditionally the, you know, the traditional recovery season we get.

So our employees aren’t getting a lot of down time anymore, because of the volcanoes in Hawaii, or because of the wildfires in California, or because of the floods that subsequently follow the wildfires.

So there is a shortened window of recuperation recovery time, and it is really impacting our membership.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. I see. Thank you. I am from Illinois, which was hit by one of the worst tornado outbreaks in the State’s history, back in December. Flooding in my district in Lake County and McHenry County, is a constant and growing threat.

We can’t ignore the scientific consensus that increasing the number and intensity of natural disasters are linked to climate change. It is personal in my community because the EPA has warned that climate change is likely to make flooding in Illinois even more frequent.

This is for anybody on the panel. How are your organizations preparing for the future, as climate change and other factors contribute to this pattern? We are seeing a bigger and more frequent natural disasters.

Major BUCCHERE. In New Jersey, as of 2019, our State hazard mitigation plan is being updated to examine the effects of climate change.

As a result, we are taking the lead on this. All 21 counties in the State of New Jersey’s hazard mitigation plan will also examine the role of climate change.

Chief SENTERFITT. Further, we are partnering with the Department of Environmental Protection on a coastal resiliency plan. That plan is in development, and that will look at climate change from a long-term perspective.

Moreover, it will, not only, with the hazard mitigation plan, where we look at the elevation of homes, the buy-out of homes, the coastal resiliency plan, we will look at critical infrastructure, the roadways, and other infrastructure.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. What can Congress do to help you prepare for these future threats as they emerge?

Major BUCCHERE. Certainly, any additional funding that Congress can provide for us to increase our programs, would be beneficial.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you. I am a nurse, so I am also very aware of both the immediate and long-term public health implications of disasters.

Even after debris is cleared, many people continue to suffer from lasting physical and mental health issues.

As recent disasters have illustrated, the most vulnerable among us, including young children, the elderly and people who are mobility-impaired can be particularly susceptible to injury and illness following a disaster.

So, Mr. Bucchere—sorry—I was interested to read about the training New Jersey has developed to promote preparedness for individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

Can you just summarize what that training entails, and would you suggest to other States who want to implement those similar programs?

Mr. PAYNE. Very quickly.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Sorry.

Major BUCCHERE. Sure. We have a very active and robust training regimen.

We have a full-time DAFN coordinator who coordinates our training. We also partner with our county and locals at the municipal level with the development of core advisory groups to take into account the entire DAFN community.

I will mention one other thing very quickly, which is, we help assist and manage the register-ready program, and get the word out, in order that all individuals with any disability or access functional needs can register. Thereby, us being able to prepare and respond in an expeditious way to serve our entire community.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Excellent. Thank you so much for your work. Thank you all for being here today.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

Now go to the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Crenshaw.

Mr. CRENSHAW. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member King, colleagues. I look forward to working with you and serving with you on this very important subcommittee on disaster preparedness response and recovery.

This is especially important to my district in Houston. As you know, we suffered through Hurricane Harvey, dumped over 33 trillion gallons of rain over us.

To understand that magnitude it is a block of rain 3 miles wide, 3 miles high and 3 miles long. That is a lot of water. A lot of residents had 6 or 7 feet of water.

As we recovered from that disaster, it was quite amazing to see how local and State and Federal entities work together, and really, how the civic communities came out, the churches and the non-profits.

I worked with Team Rubicon, specifically, which I know works both in Florida and New Jersey and New York. It is amazing to see the best of people come out when things go wrong.

One thing I want to get at with all of you is—and I will start with Mr. Senterfitt. In your experience, is there a clear hierarchy and a unity of command in disaster management? I know it is a broad question but—

Chief SENTERFITT. Yes, there is. We use the incident management system very well. We tie the municipals, the locals, and the States together very well.

You know, as my comments alluded to earlier, the one thing I want to do is get FEMA more engaged in that unity of command.

Mr. CRENSHAW. Right.

Chief SENTERFITT. Too often, they are kind-of at a distance and we could really use them as a partner at the table.

Mr. CRENSHAW. Right. My next question hits on that exactly. So go into a little bit more detail. How does that partnership look? What is the right way to think about it?

Chief SENTERFITT. You know, I say I need a partner, not an observer. I think it is just an organizational culture issue, where the FEMA people on the ground aren't allowed to engage and commit and actively participate, which then means we make decisions.

We would love to have FEMA oversight right there. We make the best decisions we can. Then later we get denied, and then and reimbursement. Then we have to go through an appeals process.

What I find most interesting is, I can watch the discomfort of the FEMA employees. They know the answers. They want to engage.

Mr. CRENSHAW. Yes.

Chief SENTERFITT. They want to be a part of the solution but the policy and process doesn't allow them to.

Mr. CRENSHAW. OK. Mr. Bucchere.

Major BUCCHERE. Yes, sir.

Mr. CRENSHAW. We are all having trouble here. OK. In your testimony you mentioned the recovery efforts after Hurricane Sandy. In your experience would it be beneficial to consolidate disaster recovery money into FEMA rather than the current system which includes SBA, Army Corps of Engineers, DOD, HUD, HHS and Mr. Senterfitt—I am sorry. If you want to add on after Mr. Bucchere's answer that would be fine.

Major BUCCHERE. In terms of the specific finances I would like to go back and take that to my recovery bureau and talk to the subject-matter experts and provide you with a written response for the record.

Mr. CRENSHAW. OK.

Chief SENTERFITT. Yes, sir, sometimes it is a challenge to try to find where all the money is at. It does get spread around a little bit and then we have to try to—as the disaster victims try to find which program should we be addressing at which time and for which amount. So anything we can do to streamline that process.

The other big issue we are having there is the programs from a project management time line perspective do not connect. So a FEMA program will end at 18 months but the repetitive flood loss process may not occur until 3 years. So the homeowners or the renters may have a 12-month period where they are just kind-of left out on their own.

So we need to get all those different programs and time line them out and make sure there is no break in continuum of care.

Mr. CRENSHAW. If you could follow up with our offices with more detail on that subject that would be much appreciated. Texas is doing its own research on this and we would like to come up with some solutions.

One thing that happened in the city of Houston was that the city of Houston didn't modify local code allowing for manufactured housing and RV units outside of mobile home parks until more than 4 months later. That was a huge problem.

Do you guys have any other examples where city and State laws get in the way of disaster recovery? What is the best way to deal with that when those things conflict?

Chief SENTERFITT. In Monroe County in the Florida Keys we have got very strict building code and we found that we been able to work through them pretty tight. But what we were finding is there is just not enough capability to produce modular homes quick enough to make up for the loss.

So it is more of a product of the environment than of the capabilities.

Mr. CRENSHAW. Anything to add? I guess I have to yield my time.

Mr. PAYNE. The gentleman's time has expired.

Next we will have the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Richmond.

Mr. RICHMOND. First off, let me thank you all for what you do. As going through both Katrina and Rita, you know, a named storm usually touches us somehow, some way. Or if it is not a named storm it could be BP or other disasters that we have.

I would like to just, you know, and it was just mentioned about sometimes whether the local laws or State laws or zoning kind-of hampers your response. I would like to flip it a little bit to talk, if you want to give some examples of how the Stafford Act just retards the whole process in terms of whole community recovery.

So let me give you some examples and you can give—the duplication of benefits was a humongous problem in terms of people coming back. Then it was counterproductive. If you were able to get a SBA loan then you had to take that money out of what you were able to receive in grant.

Then if the bar against permanent fix, that any of the money has to be spent on a temporary fix as opposed to permanent. So if we want to talk about the climax of foolishness, I will tell you what I saw in my area. I want our members to really understand this.

In a trailer subdivision, so a trailer park, we spent up to \$60,000 to \$100,000 to bring in temporary trailers to give housing to people that if we just gave them \$60,000 they would have been able to go out and purchase a permanent one. So we put temporary trailers when we could have put permanent ones and saved the taxpayer money, sped up the recovery.

It was because you cannot give money for permanent fixes so then we got creative and created the step program after disasters so people could shelter in place as opposed to putting them in a hotel.

So when you think of things that we need to be doing, you know, what can we help you all with besides another bill that I have is to make sure that the I.G. doesn't get to come play Monday morn-

ing quarterback 5 years after a disaster when you all are in the line of fire at the time and making decisions on the go.

So any of you all, if you have any thoughts or recommendations I would be very curious to hear them.

Chief SENTERFITT. Yes, sir. That is exactly the type of problems we run into. When you are telling a homeowner they can't repair their house to make basic repairs because it disqualifies them from Federal dollars, that is counterproductive. We need them in their homes.

It has been a challenge and it has been difficult. Then when you consider under the National Flood Insurance Program you are telling people that no, you can't go in and repair your home because you may be over 50 percent, which may require elevation and new standards.

The whole program needs to be re-looked at and it is time that we do a deep dive back into the Stafford Act to make sure that there is some common sense in what we are trying to do. I think over the years we have kind of gotten away from that.

Major BUCCHERE. I agree with Mr. Senterfitt and I would add any way that we can reduce the complexity of some of the Federal programs would be of great benefit I think at the State and local levels. When you have homeowners are having on-going issues with insurance companies to the point of litigation and sometimes they are missing out on the maximum benefit or benefit at all from available Federal programs.

In addition, on the back end of recovery we would certainly like to see our partners at FEMA stay the course throughout the disaster. What we are finding is that with the FEMA turnover, moving from disaster to disaster, as new staff comes in to help, which is needed, there is a difference in the interpretation of policy. So we need FEMA to assist us, a core group throughout.

Mr. RICHMOND. One of the things, which was the last recommendation of the 9/11 Commission that has still not been adopted by this Congress when both Republicans and Democrats have controlled Congress, was to give comprehensive jurisdiction to someone to oversee disasters.

So if we are talking about a hurricane response, for example, well, yes, we control FEMA and we ask for jurisdiction. But Stafford Act is the law that governs recovery. That goes to transportation. Well, the insurance committee will cover financial services will cover insurance and then you have HUD that plays a humongous role in terms of disaster CDBG money.

So it would be my hope, and I think that maybe if our will is not here to do it, maybe first responders and offices of emergency preparedness around the country will come together and kind-of force us to do it, but it would make sense to me for us to adopt that last 9/11 Commission report which says, create a committee in Congress that will have the jurisdiction to comprehensively oversee disaster recovery.

I think that, you know, it doesn't fall on any of our Chairmen and I think Chairman King was Chairman when I first got here and I remember him almost echoing these same sentiments. So hopefully, the private sector and our public servants out there can put the force behind it to make it happen.

With that, I will yield back.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, sir.

Next we will have the gentleman from Mississippi Mr. Guest.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chief WATERS, first of all I want to thank you and the nearly 58,000 both civilian and sworn officers of the New York City Police Department for not only the protection that you provide the citizens of your city, but the tens of millions of visitors that come to your city each year.

In reading your testimony, I found it very interesting. I was looking, you were talking about, and I believe that we would all agree, that communications between first responders is critical. Is that correct?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. I see that New York City has invested tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars into a radio system that uses T-band for first responders to communicate.

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Will you elaborate just a little bit for the committee? I know in reading your testimony I believe that you have invested heavily in putting communications devices both in the subway tunnels and also in the high rises so that those first responders can communicate effectively.

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Then you also mention in your testimony that there is an auction of certain T-band spectrums that will be coming on-line in 2021?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. What effect would that have upon your department's ability to communicate?

Chief WATERS. It would seriously hamper our ability and at some point would put us out of business in the ability to use our department radios to transmit to one another or receive information from the 9-1-1 operators.

Mr. GUEST. From your testimony, you have said that if your department was having to switch to a different radio frequency that it would take years and billions of dollars in infrastructure cost to make that transition.

Chief WATERS. That is correct.

Mr. GUEST. I believe that you support the Don't Break Up the T-band Act of 2019.

Chief WATERS. I do.

Mr. GUEST. Again, that would be to protect the men and women of your department and to make sure that they can adequately communicate in an emergency?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. I believe in 9/11, I believe reading or hearing that there was communication issues between first responders when the Twin Towers were attacked. Is that correct?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Do you believe that lack of communication attributed to the loss of life to some first responders and the fact that they were not able to get the evacuation order quickly enough to be able to evacuate safely at the time the towers collapsed?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Is that part of the reason that you and your department have invested so heavily in the T-band system?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Briefly, Chief Waters, I also want to talk—you talk briefly in your testimony about the use of CCTV or closed circuit television cameras.

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Have you found that to be effective in the role that you play in counterterrorism?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Have you found that to be an effective tool just for law enforcement in general? Again, not things that are necessarily related to counterterrorism but just a general law enforcement officer who is seeking to prevent or reduce crime?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir, it is a great crime-fighting tool and it is a great investigative tool.

Mr. GUEST. OK. Do you believe that the CCTV system has been able to help your department solve crime?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Do you believe it also serves as a deterrent when individuals know that they are being monitored by closed circuit TV? I know we can't quantify how many crimes we prevent, but do you believe as a veteran of the police department and your years of experience, do you believe that the closed circuit television has prevented crime?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Do you believe that the closed circuit television serves as a deterrent for those individuals who might consider engaging in terroristic activity?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Then finally, one other thing that you talked about and I believe you touched on very briefly in your opening statement was the use of unmanned aircraft sometimes referred to as drones.

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. You say in your testimony that we have seen terror groups overseas use drones as an effort to obtain either counter-surveillance or in some cases they have been able to use drones to cause harm or damage.

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Does the technology currently exist to allow the Federal Government to block or to jam signals to drones?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. Do you or does your department have the ability to access that technology?

Chief WATERS. No—well, we can access it through our Federal partners but we don't have the opportunity or the authority to do it on our own now—

Mr. GUEST. Do you believe—

Chief WATERS. Which is very much necessary.

Mr. GUEST. Yes, sir. Do you believe it would be beneficial to your department for you to be able—your department specifically, to be able to access that technology?

Chief WATERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, sir.

Next we have the gentleman from New York, Mr. Rose.

Mr. ROSE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chief WATERS, first of all thank you for being here. Thank you for your service. As a New Yorker we are really blessed to have you and your men and women with the NYPD.

I want to ask you just a few very, very simple questions. First, looking back over the last decade have you seen Federal money related to counterterrorism measures toward New York City go down, up, or stay equal?

Chief WATERS. They have gone down.

Mr. ROSE. What have been the consequences of that?

Chief WATERS. Well, we have to make some very serious choices and decisions on what programs or initiatives that we are either going to do away with or lessen the opportunities for training for officers, to give you two examples.

Mr. ROSE. If you could actually go into the specifics of that though to really illuminate the ways in which budgetary decisions here in the halls of Congress, many of which have an anti-New York bias, what has that led to specifically?

Chief WATERS. We have to work within the constraints of the budget and we take that money and figure out exactly how many officers we can train, how much equipment and technology we can purchase, how many vapor wake dogs or explosive odor pursuit dogs we can purchase with that money.

It is extremely challenging at times. We want to train as many officers as we can as often as we can.

Mr. ROSE. Sure.

Chief WATERS. We want to be able to buy that cutting-edge technology as it comes out so that we can stay ahead of the enemy, if you will and be able to better protect the citizens and the guests and visitors and all that work, live, and play in New York.

Mr. ROSE. What can we do for you to help improve your counterterrorism measures at the NYPD?

Chief WATERS. Well certainly we appreciate all the partnership that we have already gotten from the Government and this committee in particular. There are several programs. Certainly we could use more money in the different grant cycles, UASI, transit and port. The regional catastrophic grant program would need more money for regional planning in terms of preparedness for other disasters.

But, you know, money in this particular case in my bureau it is a very thoughtful and it is very deliberate process how we spend it. I realize that we are spending taxpayer money and that is very important that we can justify what we are spending it for and what the end product is.

Mr. ROSE. Thank you. Moving to another subject, something that I have been looking at with some more seriousness is ferry-related security. Across the country we are shifting more toward ferry-based modes of transportation as commuting times get worse.

What has your department done to focus on maritime-related counterterror measures and what can we do to support you?

Chief WATERS. Thank you. So we have undergone, as you well know, sir, the Staten Island ferry just underwent a review directed by the police commissioner. He tasked me with doing a full review of the personnel, equipment, training of the members of the unit that protect the ferries, ride the ferries each and every day.

As a result of that review we have given all of the officers that are assigned to that unit additional counterterrorism officer training, brought up their efficiency in certain areas, active shooter, personal radiation detection equipment, hostile surveillance, to name a few.

We also are adding at the police commissioner's direction are adding personnel to that unit to better support that unit and protect both sides of the water.

Mr. ROSE. Just one thing, though, to the Staten Island ferry specifically with what you all are doing, would you support in theory a greater National Guard presence with the Empire Shield, which does receive Federal funds to be a presence on the Staten Island side as they are on the Manhattan side? I know we are getting hyper-local here, but it is of importance to my folks.

Chief WATERS. Certainly. We welcome all of our partners. Shield is one of them. They deploy at the transit facilities in Grand Central, Penn Station. We do super searches with the Guard all the time so they would be very welcome, yes, sir.

Mr. ROSE. Thank you. That is very much appreciated. Thank you again for your service.

Chief WATERS. Thank you, sir.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Joyce.

Mr. JOYCE. Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, thank you for holding this meeting. A sincere thanks to you for coming to Washington and giving this serious input, which we need to hear.

This is a brief question. We all recognize that emerging technologies are becoming available to first responders. What can FEMA and other Federal partners do to ensure that this technology successfully gets to the end-users?

Chief Waters, I am going to ask you to address that first.

Chief WATERS. So in my area of expertise, sir, the domain awareness system is on the cutting edge of technology, our use of cameras, license plate readers, chemical and biological sensors are the key to our success, if you will, in protecting New York. The constant and ever-changing technology is something that we must keep in step in with or keep ahead of at all times.

The cameras offer us a view of the city both proactively and reactively in solving crimes and keeping people safe. License plate readers add an additional investigative value and capturing that information and being able to review that has either protected and helped solve crimes.

Mr. JOYCE. Mr. Senterfitt, can you add to that, please?

Chief SENTERFITT. Yes, sir. Cellular service has become a requirement in today's modern life. When the cell phone systems go down the disaster really impacts all of us. The purchasing cell phone technology is really not very—the cost-benefit analysis for a small community we wouldn't use it enough to be able to make a difference.

But I think if FEMA could invest in the cell phone capability where they could provide that in disaster services more quickly I think we could all benefit. That capability could move to any disaster zone anywhere in the country.

Mr. JOYCE. Mr. Reaves, do you feel that cell phone technology is adequate?

Mr. REAVES. I know that our agency spends a lot of money on cell phone technology. I know that it does help and assist in great number of survivor sites and disaster sites. Again, it is dependent upon the size of the disaster a lot of times, Mr. Joyce.

So, you know, in order to know if it is truly cost-beneficial for the Federal Government, and I would have to go back to the agency and get that information for you.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you, sir.

Mr. BUCCHERE, any additional comments?

Major BUCCHERE. I would concur with Mr. Senterfitt that there is an increased need for additional cell phone technology at the State level. In New Jersey we are working with our partners in Department of Transportation on different applications which can actively engage those in things as small as a traffic queue to larger incidents. So any advances in cell phone technology would be beneficial from the State's perspective.

Mr. JOYCE. I thank you all for your input.

I yield back my time.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

I want to thank the witnesses for their valuable testimony and Members for their questions.

Members of the subcommittee may have an additional questions for the witnesses and we ask that you respond expeditiously in writing to those questions.

Pursuant to committee rule VII(D), the hearing record will be held open for 10 days, without objection.

Hearing no further business, the subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:30 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]



## APPENDIX

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QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN DONALD M. PAYNE, JR. FOR LOUIS V. BUCCHERE

*Question 1a.* Can you describe how New Jersey works to ensure pre-disaster homeless individuals are incorporated into the disaster planning process?

*Question 1b.* How was FEMA involved in making sure the needs of homeless individuals were not left behind in the recovery process after Sandy and other disasters?

Answer. In the emergency management community we operate on the principle that all disasters start local and end local. It is important for Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Coordinators to have an understanding of the homeless population in their respective jurisdictions in order to ensure that population is taken care of during a disaster. By working with their rescue missions, non-profit organizations, faith-based groups and those involved with Cold Weather Sheltering (NJ Code Blue), the OEM coordinator has an estimate of the number of homeless that would need care. During a disaster, the homeless population is best served by the local OEM Coordinator who better understands the population and how to connect them to local available resources. In addition, the State of New Jersey, through the Department of Human Services (NJDHS), has a number of programs that offer assistance to low-income and homeless populations which, during a disaster, will continue and they will make every effort to connect those to the services they need.

During a Presidentially-Declared disaster FEMA will generally initiate their Public Assistance (PA) and/or Individual Assistance (IA) Grant Programs to support both communities and survivors in their rebuilding/recovery efforts. The Individual Assistance Program is limited to those households impacted by a disaster and there is a finite dollar amount placed on the amount awarded to the survivor. None of this funding is specifically allocated to support the homeless population. It is contingent upon the State, the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), and the established Long-Term Recovery Groups (LTRGs) to make a difference in assisting those survivors with continued unmet needs. New Jersey is fortunate to have strong ties with the VOAD community as well as the FEMA Voluntary Liaison from Region II.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, 14 county-based LTRGs were established throughout the State which made a difference assisting those survivors when FEMA IA funding ran out. The Emergency Assistance Group of the Mass Care Team coordinates programs to support disaster survivors in providing temporary State aid, General Assistance or the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (DSNAP), Disaster Legal Assistance, Temporary Disaster Unemployment and other necessary State programs as necessary.

NJDHS continually works with the low-income and homeless populations through their many Divisions and the County Welfare Agencies or Boards of Social Services that assist those in need with items such as financial assistance, food, or housing. During an activation of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) the Emergency Support Function No. 6 (ESF6) Plan is broken up into 5 distinct groups in order to efficiently coordinate Mass Care:

- Sheltering
- Feeding
- Emergency Assistance
- Disaster Housing
- Human Services

The groups are tasked with assisting the homeless through identifying needs and support for individuals and to assist with expediting processing of new benefits claims. Even during a disaster these programs continue and are sometimes expanded or have requirements waived to support low-income or homeless populations. It is important to note that any Federal Program coming to a State to offer disaster support needs to be coordinated through the State's emergency management system in order to ensure the disaster funds are used in the most efficient

and proper manner. Two examples of this are the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and the Social Service Block Grant (SSBG) funds that were introduced to New Jersey in the aftermath of Sandy.

The CDBG funds came through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support rebuilding efforts in New Jersey. These funds are managed by the NJ Department of Community Affairs (NJDCA) as they are the lead agency tasked with coordinating long-term housing post-disaster. The SSBG funds were managed by NJDHS through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families. The funds were utilized for 2 types of programs: (1) Community-wide programs available to all members of the community in the highly impacted areas including but not limited to clinical counseling, service coordination, and outreach; and (2) programs addressing uncovered costs related to the storm's damage of home or property, including household repairs, restoration of accessibility enhancements, and short-term housing subsidies for residents for whom no other financial assistance is available or where gaps exist.

There are other support programs that New Jersey provides, such as the Social Service for the Homeless (SSH) Program which is coordinated through the NJDHS. This program can also be used to support at risk persons during times of disaster. As an example, SSH was used to offer assistance to those Puerto Rico evacuees who came to New Jersey in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria when their housing options ran out.

During times of disaster recovery it is critical to partner with emergency management programs so that funds can be utilized in the most efficient way to aid survivors.

QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN DONALD M. PAYNE, JR. FOR MARTIN "MARTY"  
SETERFITT

*Question 1.* With the geographic location of the Florida Keys, I can imagine that climate change is a major concern and informs the preparedness plans of the county. Can you tell the subcommittee how climate change plays a role in Monroe County's preparedness and mitigation activities?

Answer. Monroe County, Florida, also known as the Florida Keys, an archipelago of low-lying islands more than 100 miles long, is one of the areas in our Nation most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. With many of its' 300 miles of roads and facilities at or near sea level and with sea level rise projections of 14-34 inches by the year 2060, the county has already begun to plan and implement mitigation and adaptation programs and projects in preparation.

The county prepared a GreenKeys Climate and Resilience Plan ([www.greenkeys.info](http://www.greenkeys.info)), which focuses on 5 areas of recommendations ([www.greenkeys.info/focus-areas-recommendations](http://www.greenkeys.info/focus-areas-recommendations)) and listed specific projects for mitigation and adaptation over a 5-year time frame ([www.templatemodifiers.com/monroe-up/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Appendix-I-5-Year-Work-Plan.pdf](http://www.templatemodifiers.com/monroe-up/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Appendix-I-5-Year-Work-Plan.pdf)). By planning and implementing projects and programs while sea-level rise effects are in the early stages, the county will maximize the effectiveness and cost efficiencies of its efforts over the long term. The ultimate goal is to focus its resources on enabling the county and its residents to live with the effects of climate change and to allow its many visitors continued access to this beautiful sub-tropical island chain.

For its adaptation efforts, the county reviewed its infrastructure including buildings, roads, bridges, parks, and utilities (water, wastewater, and electrical) and determined that roads and buildings were the two areas of infrastructure most vulnerable to sea-level rise. Initial modeling was conducted to determine the potential effects of climate change to roads and facilities and how the county, its residents and visitors could be affected in the future. Based on this research, the county has moved forward with elevating all new county facilities to account for the anticipated sea-level rise over the next 50 years. In addition, 2 pilot road elevation projects are underway in Big Pine Key and Key Largo, where a section of road in each community will be elevated and have drainage features added to handle current and future levels of sea-level rise anticipated over the next 25 years.

The county also recently completed mobile LiDAR elevation surveys of all of its 300 miles of county-maintained roads. This LiDAR data will be combined with the sea-level rise predictions over the next 30 to 40 years for the county to prepare a Roads Adaptation Plan that will identify which roads need to be elevated, how high, and when. While this Plan is being developed, the county will also analyze its policies to determine which roads, if any, may not be able to be elevated and how many days a year, if any, residents may anticipate experiencing flooding on their neighborhood roads. The county has limited resources available to pay for roads elevation implementation, which could cost the county \$1 billion or more. Therefore, without

State and Federal assistance, difficult policy decisions may need to be made to focus these resources. In the interim while the Roads Plan is being developed, the county adopted Resolution 028–2017 that includes an “interim” road design standard that: (1) Accounts for sea-level rise for the 1“useful life” of the road project (approximately 25 years) and (2) includes a threshold not to exceed projected flooding more than 7 days annually.

For its mitigation efforts, Monroe County adopted a goal for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction of 40% by 2030 from the 2012 inventory level. Monroe County also completed the STAR (Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating Communities) community rating system application and was ranked a 3-STAR community with a total score of 261.3 points (3-STAR Community 200–399 points) and was recognized for sustainability leadership. Efforts at mitigation also include adopting energy efficiency for county operations, fleet management goals, and solid waste strategies. Mitigation is included in numerous policies adopted by the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners including a feasibility study for light rail, the GreenKeys Sustainability Action Plan, Monroe County Comprehensive Plan—Energy and Climate Element, recycling of yard waste, and adoption of GHG emission reduction goals for the county. Following are examples of mitigation priorities:

- Establishment of a solar feasibility study for all new and existing county-owned buildings.
- Development of a Green Purchasing Policy underway.
- Adoption of the Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program county-wide.
- Adoption of Energy Awareness Month.
- Adoption of a Transportation Study to reduce emissions.
- Establishment of an internal Energy Reduction Task Force.
- Adaptation Action Area criteria development.
- Development of the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Action Plan with the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Compact.
- Creation of the Energy Efficiency Conservation Strategy for municipal operations.
- Adoption and implementation of Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant activities in 2010–2012.

*Question 2.* We’ve heard reports from communities in Puerto Rico that many have been unable to start any permanent work Public Assistance (PA) projects because the island was pressured into using the Section 428, Alternative Procedures PA program. Can you tell us where in the process Monroe County is with their permanent work projects?

*Answer.* Monroe County has not elected to participate in the Alternative Procedures for Permanent Work program (Section 428). To date, Monroe County has identified 36 permanent work projects and all 36 projects have been submitted to FEMA for formulation. Of the 36 permanent work projects submitted to FEMA only one has been obligated. Twenty-nine projects are currently with FEMA at the CRC and 6 are in final review, 3 of those at the State level. At this time no funding has been received for any permanent work projects.

QUESTION FROM CHAIRMAN DONALD M. PAYNE, JR. FOR STEVE REAVES

*Question.* As you know, FEMA has many different types of employees, including full-time and on call, that can be deployed once disaster strikes. These people are integral in having capable response and recovery for communities. Can you describe the benefits of having permanent, full-time workers at FEMA over temporary employees that do not have the same labor protections or training?

*Answer.* Response was not received at the time of publication.

